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HELLENISTIC RELIGIONS

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I. THE ESSENCE OF HELLENISTIC RELIGION

It may seem strange but it is nevertheless true that in periods in which cosmopolitanism or universalism is widespread we also find that individualism shows an increase. While religion, philosophy, and government policy are all apparently doing their best to shape an all-embracing uniformity that the most various peoples will feel at home in, there are some in all layers of society who, though accepting the great unifying ideas of their time, feel impelled by the very existence of these same ideas to lay more stress on their own individuality. And so, in a paradoxical way, universalism may be said to strengthen individualism. This paradox finds excellent illustration in the period of Alexander and his successors (hellenism I) and that of the early Roman Empire (hellenism II). Under Alexander and his immediate successors the hellenic spirit, in its widest sense, was brought into closer contact with the various civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean, and though the conquest of the East at first resulted in the spread of Greek influences among the subjected peoples, it was not long before hellenism itself—which was already a compound formed from the whole Greek world—began to absorb at an ever increasing rate the conceptions of those who, in accordance with the testament of their great leader Alexander, were to be treated not as uncivilized and barbarous members of subject races but as equals with whom one must live in concord (ὁμόνοια). The characteristic traits peculiar to the Asiatic, Egyptian, Syrian and Persian cultures now had to be fully recognized, accepted and re-worked. Alexander himself was the representative example—often in disaccord with his best friends and followers—of these progressive ideas, as he showed in Troy, during his visits to the oracle of Jupiter Ammon in the oasis of Siwa and the Apis at Thebes, and

shortly before his death in Babylon at the wedding ceremonies of Macedonians, Greeks, and Asiatics. As the heir of Greek tradition he granted liberty and freedom as far as was possible—naturally less in political than in cultural and religious respects.

But Alexander did not have time to incorporate the western peoples in his projected worldwide empire. The immense task of organizing the western and the eastern world under one central sceptre was the destiny of Rome. After preparations lasting several centuries in which the Scipios, Pompey, and Caesar played the foremost roles, the first centuries before and after the beginning of our era saw the developments we may refer to as hellenism II. But more than in hellenism I east and west felt the presence of imperial rule as a result of the strong political organisation of Rome, and one of the most striking features of Roman power was the official State religion with the increasingly important cult of the Emperor. The indigenous religious creeds of the various peoples were respected on two conditions—that the Roman State-cult was recognized and respected (especially on official Roman festivals), and that the indigenous cults did not lead to disorder. The approved middle way was that of identifying one's own deities with those of the Romans—a syncretism which one also finds in hellenism I where (as it seems to me) it proceeded in a more natural and less forced way. In hellenism I one also remarks that the *Diadochi* themselves, and especially the Ptolemies, tried to put forward a flexible solution for their subjects by promoting cults able to combine the creeds of both Greeks and other peoples. In hellenism II however, and indeed long before, the Romans accepted foreign deities only with the greatest difficulty, though Ovid—to give an example—in the *Fasti* joyfully exclaims that the Asiatic Cybele has finally returned from Troy to Rome, the usual attitude was very different. Especially in the Capital the *pontifex maximus* and the priestly societies remained cautious and suspicious of newly-introduced cults.

Since the whole varied heritage of the Greeks had come into the possession of the Romans, there were great differences between the religious traditions in many provinces not only in the east but also in the west. It is only in this century that scholars have begun to distinguish the various varieties, using both literary and archaeological sources. Much study will still be necessary before the real facts of the diffusion of the eastern mystery cults over the Mediterranean world can be established. The great cosmopolitan cities such as Alexandria, Athene and Rome deserved especial attention and though

in hellenistic times they formed with their large conglomerations of people and culture a section apart, there are as yet no monographs that describe their complicated religious characteristics with any precision.

The Greek City-states that founded colonies in the east and in the west were accustomed to export their own deities and heroes at the same time. This immediately explains the differences between the religious cults in the various Greek cities, whose inhabitants because of their worship of the Greek gods felt themselves to be Greeks amid foreigners. The foreign cults were indeed adopted but their minor shrines usually gave way very soon to imposing Greek temples. In hellenistic times however the Greeks going abroad as founders of a new city came no more from an especial City-state but from the whole Greek nation. Moreover the Greek no longer encountered only uncivilized peoples but he now went to countries with a high civilization of their own, which was often more ancient than that of the Greeks. Together with these peoples they founded the many new cities of the *Diadochi*, and these cities must from the very beginning have had a more mixed and less purely-hellenic character, which in the religious sphere finds its expression in the cult of Tyche as goddess of the new City and link between the various creeds. The Greeks (and Macedonians) now came into contact with certain great, traditional oriental deities, who had such individual and impressive cults, that they could not be forced to yield any ground to the gods of the Greeks. One therefore sees that e.g. in Egypt the Greeks worshipped their own deities but at the same time did not neglect the Egyptian gods. It seems that the Greeks were less inclined to impose their own ideas on other peoples, and were more adaptable than the Romans, who immediately built new Capitols for the Roman triad everywhere.

As a result of international diplomatic relations, trade, and culture, as well as the racial mixture and the army, the oriental cults had excellent opportunities to start their spread over the hellenistic world. The decisive period was hellenism I during which some of these cults became officially accepted in Greece and Rome (Isis, Cybele, Dea Syria), the new cult of Serapis arose, and some others seem certainly to have been transformed into mystery-cults (Mithras). Their largest diffusion however took place during hellenism II and especially in the second and third centuries A.D. During the Roman Republic and under the first two Roman Emperors religious politics were uncertain, sometimes hostile; but from Caligula, Claudius, and Nero on the eastern cults soon demolished the walls of the old *pomerium*.

What then finally was happening in the hellenistic beliefs? We have just seen that old traditional cults did not disappear, since they were representative of a race, a nation or a state. Nor did magic or astrology disappear. Both of them always flourished in Antiquity not only in the country on the peasant's farm, and among simple people of the larger cities, but also in the villas of the upper classes. What indeed took place, just as in modern times, was that an ever-increasing number of people were able to make acquaintance with foreign beliefs hitherto unknown, with new philosophies and forms of knowledge. During such periods of rapid evolution the human mind is inclined to doubt much that seemed established forever; old traditions are thrown overboard, sometimes too quickly; the new, attractive as it always is, is preferred to the old. Others conclude a treaty between the old and new. These gradations can also be seen in hellenistic religion. The assimilation of various deities (such as is found in the Isis' hymns, and in Lucian's *the Dea Syria*) led to unification; the worship of the many solar gods led finally to henotheism; the eastern and later the western monarchs were emanations of gods, mostly of solar gods, hence they too found their worshippers; the choice of deities was larger and since ancient man was not bound by dogma his choice was also much more free; the individual had the opportunity to worship his personal deities outside his own country also. This means that besides the more-or-less official cults supervised by the city or state priests, there was much more place for a personal deity and for those deities whose cults were of more restricted appeal. Indeed all the mighty gods of Greece, Egypt, Asia, Gaul, and Germany who seemed only to notice mankind when worshipped by the whole people, now began to lose their hold on people's minds. There were however other deities who by a dream or some other sign personally called their own devotees; they drew them away from their former evil ways to close personal contact with their new god (conversion); their life-stories furnished patterns of behaviour for their worshippers; they were sure guides through the difficulties of earthly existence, and they also promised a happy after-life. The most faithful and fervent of their followers were sometimes privileged to have a vision of the deity, even during their life-time. They were, in short, individual Saviour gods. For the Greeks and Romans this meant that many exchanged the majestic temples of the all too human Olympian gods for the simple chapels of divinities who were equally human but nevertheless immaculate. These included those of the old gods, such as Asklepios, Artemis and Heracles, who

had similar characteristics and whose presence was the most felt.

These various cults competed with each other and one after another seemed about to become the State-religion. The cult of Isis and Serapis was particularly successful, and forced its way into many other sanctuaries. (It is also, of course, possible that these other gods welcomed the Egyptian deities into their temples in order to strengthen their own position and spread their own influence yet further afield.) However all these attempts, including those of the Emperors, to create a single imperial cult from those of the whole empire shipwrecked on the unwillingness of the Roman to accept something that was so different from his ancestral traditions (Caesar, Antony, Caligula, Nero, Heliogabalus and Aurelian), and it was not until Constantine that one religion was able to unite the East and West.

II. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Through their contacts with the East the Greeks became acquainted with the oriental gods long before the beginning of hellenism I, but in Greece itself these deities generally remained foreigners—the Isis sanctuary in the Piraeus known from an inscription of 333-332 B.C. was intended more for Egyptian traders in the Athenian harbour than for the Greeks; the same document authorizes Phoenician traders from Cyprus to build a temple for Aphrodite i.e. for Astarte. There is however one exception made—for Cybele, mother of the gods, whose cult statue in the old *bouleuterion* of the Agora was attributed to either Pheidias or his pupil Agorakritos. A relief from the Piraeus, dated to the fourth century B.C. even shows Agdistis = Cybele together with her favourite, Attis, and this goddess was soon assimilated to Rhea and the mighty mistress of the animals. The impulse to the spread of the oriental cults was given by the *Diadochi* and their successors, and as early as the end of the third and the beginning of the second centuries B.C. the documents start to reveal the conquest of the eastern cults in ever clearer terms.

It is curious that the cult of Men, another Phrygian deity, does not seem to have been known in Attica before hellenism I; on the other hand it must be due to the innate hatred of the Greeks for the Persian peoples that Mithra did not find any acceptance in Greece before the second century A.D.—the Iranian goddess Anāitis was not accepted at all.

Study of the archaeological documents makes it clear that the cults of Cybele, Isis, and Serapis were the most popular of the eastern cults in the Greek Mediterranean world as early as hellenism I. In hellenism II the Iranian Mithras and the various Syrian Ba'als and their consorts spread their influence over the hellenistic world, but with the difference that this group of gods seems to have been largely restricted to the west while the Egyptian and Phrygian cults continued to be popular also in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.

As for the Egyptian cults—Isis was, like Cybele, one of the easiest foreign deities for the Greeks to accept; but this did not mean that the Greeks were willing to adopt the Egyptian veneration for holy animals. This created a difficulty, since the deified Osiris was represented by the bull, Apis! And so Ptolemy I Soter decided to create a new god, by fusing Osiris and Apis to form Serapis. The introduction of this new deity is known from various traditions mentioned in Tacitus (*Hist.*, IV, 83) and Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride*, 28). The new cult was a political, religious, and artistic reform. Modern scholars like P. Fraser do not consider that the statue and the cult of Serapis originally came from Sinope on the Black Sea, from Babylon, or from Seleucia in Syria, but are of the opinion that it arose at Memphis and found its centre in Alexandria, where a large temple was built in his honour. The last statue of the Greek artist Bryaxis was the embodiment of this new conception of the deity in precious metals. The god was portrayed seated on a throne and his bearded face was similar to those of Zeus, Hades, and Asclepius. As a fertility-god he wore on his head a *modius* or *kalathos* adorned with olive-branches and sometimes filled with fruit. In his left hand he held a sceptre (Zeus) and at his right hand-side was seated three-headed Cerberus of the Underworld. Later on many other artistic types of the god (standing and reclining figures; arising together with Isis from snakes etc.) are to be found. Tradition agrees that Ptolemy was advised on the formation of the cult by two religious scholars: the Egyptian Manetho, high priest in Heliopolis, and the Greek Timotheus, high priest in Eleusis, known as theologian of the cult of Demeter and Cybele.

Many details of the story are still obscure, but, the evidence shows that the new cult under the protection of the first Ptolemies and favoured, as it was, by the aristocratic families, was soon spread throughout the Greek world by traders and the army. One also notices that in the earlier representations of the divine couple Serapis is a more important figure than Isis. In the later mystery-cult, however, as we

know it from the classical authors, Isis is the principal Egyptian deity. But the spread of the worship of Isis and Serapis in the West was not to be as easy. From the excavations of the Iseum at Pompeii it appears that here the cult must have been introduced as early as the second century B.C., and an inscription from Puteoli proves the existence of a Serapeum here in 105 B.C. But when Isis, advancing from Campania tried to conquer the Capitol, the Senate took sharp measures. The position of her cult was for the next few years influenced by Roman politics and national feelings—Augustus and Tiberius who favoured the official and traditional Roman cult were especially hostile to the Isiac devotees, who were regarded as traitors and followers of Cleopatra. But from Caligula onwards the Egyptian cult began to flourish over the whole empire. Isis appears in the imperial palace on the Palatine, and the first large Iseum and Serapeum is built on the Campus Martius, to be followed by a second on the Quirinal during the reign of Caracalla (211-217). Serapis and Isis now entered the temples of other oriental deities (Jupiter Dolichenus, Mithras) also, and were influenced but not superseded by them, as is proved for the end of the fourth century when the Egyptian deities (A. Alföldi) appear on coins as a medium of propaganda for the aristocratic pagan party against victorious Christendom.

The emperor Julian (*Or.*, VIII [V], 159) mentions that according to the tradition it was on the instigation of the Delphic oracle that the Athenians built the temple of Cybele; the Metroon at Thebes is supposed to have had the same origin (*schol. ad Pind., Pyth.*, III, 137). This would mean that the cult of the Mother of the gods was accorded official recognition. When the Roman Senate and the aristocratic families introduced the cult into Rome about two hundred years later (204 B.C.), they did this in an official manner also, only taking the step after having consulted the Sybilline books and the Pythian oracle. This goddess was already a well-known personality to the Greeks. In her statues and cult Greek traits superseded the oriental ones, and the Phrygian Attis was consequently pushed into the background. For the Romans however, the goddess was a Phrygian deity with a wild, ecstatic cult and she came, just as they themselves did, from Troy. The goddess who was to bring victory over Hannibal was finally home; hence her temple was built on the Palatine next to the place where the original Roman huts dating from the eighth century B.C. (the foundation of the city) have been found. And so the Trojan cult was finally accepted inside the *pomerium*; in her honour official feasts were insti-

tuted, but it seems that certain asiatic rites especially connected with Attis were limited to the Palatine only.

P. Romanelli did indeed find terracotta figurines of Attis dating from the Republican period during his excavations of the temple of the Magna Mater on the Germalus, but, on the other hand, on the coins of the Republican age Cybele is represented alone. We know from Joh. Lydus (*De Mensibus* IV, 59), a byzantine author of the sixth century A.D., that the emperor Claudius reorganized the cycle of feasts in honour of Cybele during the month of March. He is supposed to have instituted on the 22th of March the feast of *Arbor intrat* (see below), at which the collegium of the *dendrophori* (tree-bearers) brought a pine-tree to the Palatine. J. Carcopino consequently concluded that the cult of Attis, connected with the pine-tree, had also gained a measure of official recognition; P. Lambrechts is however of the opinion that the veneration of Attis as a god does not appear before the middle of the second century A.D. But the Belgian scholar does nevertheless lay stress on an evolution in ideas about the nature of Attis, and he does not accept the theory that the god is one of the dying and resurrecting deities of the orient. In any case it is clear that from the first century A.D. Attis appears more and more on the monuments and that in the wall-paintings at Pompeii he is even represented alone without the goddess. From the second century A.D., and especially during the period of Antoninus Pius, the cult of Cybele and Attis became very important in Ostia, where a special sanctuary was built in honour of each of them.

The first *taurobolium* and *criobolium* inscriptions (see p. 518) also date from this period, and continue to be in evidence till the end of the fourth century and the last pagan resistance against the new Christian State-religion.

Studying the arrival of Mithraism in the West one finds the same periods in its history. It is possible that Iranian ideas were introduced into Greece in the time of Plato, but the "barbarous" oriental religion was not admitted. On the other hand Fr. Cumont and J. Bidez have shown that it was especially during hellenism I that the priestly-class of the *Magi* or *Magousaioi* were busy transforming the adoration of Mithra into the Mithras-mysteries.

Plutarch (*Vita Pomp.*, 24) tells us that the Romans came into contact with Mithras through Cilician pirates who after their defeat by Pompey the Great were settled in Italy. Once again, just as in the history of the cults of the Egyptian Isis and the Phrygian Attis, the first century

B.C. seems to have been the period in which this oriental cult with its oriental rites was waiting before the City gates to receive official acknowledgement from the Senate. Once again the successors of Augustus and Tiberius were its first promoters. In the case of Mithras it is probable that Nero favoured the cult of this Iranian Sun-god, and in A.D. 66 the Armenian king Tiridates I arriving at Rome for his coronation adored Nero as Mithras. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, XXX,1,6) mentions that during this visit the oriental king initiated Nero at a magic repast. Not a single representation of Mithras has been found in Pompeii; Statius (about A.D. 80) does however describe a statue of the god. But from the second century A.D. one finds the invincible god in all provinces of the Roman Empire, brought by soldiers and traders.

These followers were not only foreigners but also Roman citizens from among the highest ranks, and in the second century the god even penetrated into the Imperial palace on the Palatine. These few scattered indications together with the archaeological documentation are almost all we have on which to base our knowledge of Mithraism—one is, however, able to follow the attempt of the Mithraists to make their religion the official State-cult, in which the secret mysteries had nevertheless to be reserved for an exclusive community. At the beginning of the third century A.D. one notices the tendency, favoured by the Severan house, towards a henotheistic belief in one general Sun-god who would satisfy the common religious aspirations and who could unify the most various peoples of the Empire. This impulse came from the Syrian Ba'als. The strength of these gods did not subsist in their myths (see below) but in their developing from weather gods and local protectors of the City into universal Sun-gods. The Ba'al from Doliche (*Jupiter Dolichenus*) was thus able to conquer Rome (sanctuaries on the Aventine and Esquiline) and many of the Roman provinces; the Ba'al of Syrian Heliopolis (Ba'albek), i.e. Jupiter Heliopolitanus, found a residence in the capital (on the Janiculum) and some other cities and countries; for the Ba'al of Hierapolis (Bambyce) and his consort Atargatis a temple was built in Trans Tiberim. None of these Ba'als, however, was able to become the universally recognized Sun-god of the Empire; they were all overshadowed by Mithras and the Egyptian and Phrygian deities, but the cult of many of them did not spread in the West until the Antonine or the Severan periods. It is difficult to disentangle the web of mutual influence that characterizes the history of the oriental religions in the second and third centu-

ries A.D. Malakbel (Sun-god) and Aglibol (Moon) found little acceptance in the West. The Iranian Mithra, also known in Syria, suffered under the severe handicap that women were not admitted as members of his cult. Another disadvantage, which however does not seem to have influenced the Romans to the same extent as the Greeks, was that his origin lay in a hostile country. But certainly it was too early when Heliogabalus (218-222), a young high-priest of the Ba'al of Emesa and now Emperor brought the holy black stone to Rome. He made the same mistake as Caesar did when he presented Cleopatra-Isis to the Roman people. The appropriate time did not come before the end of the third century when the Emperor Aurelian after his victory over Queen Zenobia built a temple for the invincible Sun-god from Emesa on the slope of the Quirinal-hill. From this time on the Syrian god gradually became more romanised, thus becoming a single Roman State-god. The various efforts to create one State-religion led in the fourth century to the last and final struggle between the competing cults which ended in the victory of Christianity.

III. THE CONCEPTION OF THE DEITY

In classical Greek religion the deities lived on Olympus far removed from mankind, where they were governed by Zeus who entrusted special powers to each of them. Their immortality created an immense gap between their world and that of men. Mortals realized their complete dependence on the almighty gods, to whom they were bound to pray and bring offerings. The divinities came into contact with mortals either to help or to punish them. The cosmos was therefore divided into a happy and an unhappy part. The denizens of the first almost without exception knew only pleasures and passions, which were, as it happens, those of this world also but to mankind were reserved hard daily labour, hunger, and illness, which after a short period led to death. Hence the Greek sought immortality in famous deeds; though in the underworld he would still, at any rate, live on in men's memories. Yet, there were some gods and heroes who had experienced grief, like man, and had pity on him more than the others: Demeter who lost her daughter and after many wanderings gave grain to the world; Dionysus who during his wanderings brought wine and the divine ecstasy that makes man forget his labours (*λυσίπνοος*); Asclepius who appeared in dreams and restored the sick to health;

and Heracles and Odysseus, the latter because he as a mortal equalled the immortals.

In hellenistic times man sought those gods who seemed to be seeking him. In his misfortune he sought gods who were able to bring good fortune—no longer good fortune due to chance but that which was acquired by personal merit. A man had to be able to follow the divine example, otherwise he would be excluded from salvation; he must have complete trust and faith in the deity, who, in his turn, demanded service as if from a slave or soldier, certain ethical standards, and, from the intellectual, the knowledge necessary to enter into closer contact. And so religious feelings had a tendency to change from materialistic into spiritual; the material offerings which mostly meant *do ut des* were transformed into *impera ut implorem* i.e. the deity commanded no longer primarily material but rather spiritual offerings, and if man was minded to fulfill these commands, the deity was prepared to listen to the requests of his devotee. These devotees organized themselves more and more into closed societies, where they felt at home and found other like-minded persons willing to help each other, even as their god was prepared to save them all.

It should be noted that it was in the fourth century B.C. that the Asclepius-cult at Epidaurus, which had existed from the sixth century, found its greatest period of growth. In the city itself the large temple, the theatre, and the rooms for "incubation" all date from this period; Cos, Pergamum and many other centres with their medical faculties also flourished at this time; and in 293 B.C. this god arrived in Rome. The physician, though in service of the god, worked in a rational manner; the god himself in an irrational way. He was the miraculous god who required complete faith of his patients, so that one of his devotees cried out: "Do not admire the greatness of the offering, but the might of the god." The god himself in a dream or vision personally gave advice to the patient about the cure for his sickness. There is even a mystery cult connected with this god, which we know through the physician Thessalus (first century A.D.), to whom the god appeared in the sanctuary at Thebes, after his preparation by the priests and a period of fasting, and revealed his divine doctrine.

Serapis was also a god of healing as may be seen from the marble and terracotta votive-gifts representing feet and eyes which are found in the temples of both deities. But literary and archaeological documentation lay stress rather on his Zeus-Hades character. Like Zeus he must therefore have been an universal god, reigning over the upper-

world. Like so many other deities, he was invoked as ὕψιστος, a possible sign of influence from Judaism, like the epithet κύριος. With other hellenistic gods he had in common the titles of βασιλεύς and σωτήρ which clearly connect him directly with the Egyptian royal house. To Zeus owes his title μέγας, and the formal εἷς θεός to his identification with Helios-Sol. In the same way he was introduced into the cults of Mithras (hence the adjective *invictus*) and of the Syrian Jupiter Doli-chenus. From Hades, as a governor of the Lower World, he took his severe look, his companion Cerberus, and his rule over fertility, which is expressed by either a *modius* on his head or a *cornucopia* in his left hand.

Isis, who in hellenistic times nearly always figures together with Serapis, also received more and more might and eventually became a pantheistic goddess, as is clear from the hymns in her honour as well as the artistic representations. As the consort of Osiris-Serapis she is the heavenly queen (*regina*), who governs the elements, the stars and planets. No wonder that she is also able to enter the underworld and help her true devotees. Thus until the end of the fourth century A.D. her powers over the land and the corn, over the sea and the corn traffic, are praised and serve as propaganda for the anti-Christian party. She was in particular identified with the Moon-goddess Selene, with the Eleusinian Demeter, and with Tyche. In all these identifications her relationship with the vegetative life in nature remained important. In the second place she was the representative of female nature. In distress she sought the dismembered Osiris and assisted him to new life; in the same way she will help as a δώτειρα her devotees in the after-life. She is the divine mother of Horus-Harpocrates and it is this aspect of her nature that is stressed in the many representations in which she is suckling her child. Like Cybele she helps women in childbirth and in bringing up a baby. She is like Aphrodite/Venus a particularly womanly goddess and she can therefore be connected with the Syrian Atargatis and Phoenician Astarte.

What has been said about Isis also applies in great part to Cybele. There is however one great difference: Isis is never the mighty and often harsh mistress of the animals, like Cybele with her lions. In a more general way one might say that basically Isis represents the soft and tender feelings in woman's life and Osiris the severe and even hard features. However much she was tortured by the misfortunes of Osiris, nevertheless she remained the ideal wife who lived only for her husband, and will therefore help all other women in distress. She is

also the example of a mother who brings up her child to revenge his father. Cybele's story is however quite different. In one tradition Attis is her child, though born in a most miraculous way; usually however he is regarded as her lover, from whom she forever asks eternal love such as Artemis did of Hippolytus. Isis when punishing Seth-Typhon through her son Horus was not able to complete her revenge; Attis on the other hand was driven insane by the goddess after his unfaithfulness and was tormented by her as long as she herself, after her own frenzy, had to kneel before mighty Zeus.

After a long period of development this large gap between the character of the two goddesses gradually narrowed. Cybele then became just such a deity as Juno-Demeter-Venus; she was the mother of life on earth, protector of cities like Tyche, helper of women like Juno and Venus. But those ecstatic and wild asiatic traits, which one also sees in the Dionysiac cult and which play an essential role in her character, never disappeared.

In studying the so-called syncretistic trend in the conception of the male and female deities in general one notices that the original traits often partly fade away; and that not every example of syncretism follows the same course; nor is it always clear how these mutual interchanges precisely took place. But, as we have said, each divinity (especially during hellenism II) seems to have tried to attract as many powers as possible in order to become the universal deity of the Roman Empire. This tendency is clearly to be seen in the epithet *invictus* or *invicta*, which is in fact properly to be applied only to the Syrian Ba'als and to Mithras. The Ba'als were weather gods, protectors of cities and their citizens to whom they brought fertility. They wield the thunderbolt, the lightning, and a sceptre; often they have a war-like appearance. They were soon assimilated to Zeus and Jupiter, but without entirely losing their originally nature and the masks of their home-countries, where they had already become solar deities. The Iranian Mithras on his arrival in the West was a solar deity too. But among the other oriental deities he has a special place, because his person and his myth have such a strong spirituality. He is a famous warrior, but in the service of Good and Light against Evil and Darkness; he is guardian of oaths and truth; his battles, in which he is naturally victorious, are not waged only for material welfare but also for ideals. His creation of vegetative life by slaying the bull means at the same time a victory over his own person, since it was against his will that he fulfilled the commandment of the gods. As Sun-god he

sees every action of mankind, and consequently he becomes god of justice, in this capacity he also takes part in the Last Judgement.

IV. WORSHIP

A. *Myth*

Apart from philosophical and astrological speculations about the deities and heroes, there are some Greek and rather more oriental divinities whose myth led to a secret doctrine, only accessible to those who had been initiated into the cult and had become true followers. These cults are therefore referred to as the mystery or mysteriosophical cults. In Greece itself the Eleusinian and Dionysian cults were already in existence before our period, but they now began to flourish and developed in the whole Mediterranean world. The cult of Demeter and Persephone was found everywhere that Greeks settled, but the real mystery cult for both goddesses was restricted to Eleusis, and so those who wished to come into the closest contact with these mysteries had to go to the city of the corn-ear whether they were hellenistic kings or Roman emperors. The Dionysiac mysteries however were accessible in many other places also—even in a little village such as Pompeii (Villa dei Misteri). The myths of both Demeter and Dionysus are very old, and both are related to the wonder of the yearly growth of the corn and the vine. This rise of food and drink from the earth after the winter was ascribed to these powerful divinities and became for the initiates a symbol of their own death and resurrection. The vegetation gods of the east represent the same pattern, but each of them has his own myth, sometimes with differences varying with country and time. Of these eastern cults those of Egypt (Isis and Serapis) were the most favoured in Greece but they never overshadowed the native Greek mysteries. During hellenism II all the mystery cults spread over the Roman Empire; yet it is remarkable that the cult of Mithras was practised in Greece by the Romans only. This shows that the Greek religion was able to satisfy individual religious feelings in the hellenistic age also.

Indeed Demeter, who sought her daughter and after much terrible wandering found her again, is very like the Egyptian Isis and Phrygian Cybele. All three belong to the category of mother-goddesses, and all three, on account of their own sorrowful adventures, are deeply moved by the lot of humanity and have therefore become goddesses helpful to mankind.

In archaeological sources Demeter and Isis are sometimes represented together in the same relief, and in literary sources their myths have some close affinities—at any rate in the story as told by Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* (second cent. A.D.):

Osiris, king and god, brought the Egyptian people the “fruits of cultivation, by giving them laws, and by teaching them to honour the gods”. His sisters were Isis and Nephthys, and his brother was Typhon or Seth. Osiris married Isis. Typhon contrived a treacherous plot and made a beautiful chest of the same size as Osiris’ body. During a feast he promised to present the chest to whoever fitted into it exactly, and when Osiris got into it, Typhon and his companions slammed down the lid, carried the chest to the river and sent it on its way to the sea. Isis wandered everywhere looking for her husband. After a time she learnt that the chest had been cast up by the sea near the land of Byblus and that the waves had gently set it down in the midst of a clump heather (ἐπεύκη). And now follows a scene which immediately reminds one of Demeter, who was accepted in the house of King Celeus in Eleusis and who nursed the child Triptolemos there in order to make him immortal. In the same way Isis arrived at Byblus “and sat down by a spring, all dejection and tears; she exchanged no word with anybody, save only that she welcomed the queen’s maidservants and treated them with great amiability. She thus became so intimate with the queen that the queen made her the nurse of her baby. She nursed the child by giving it her finger to suck instead of her breast, and in the night she would burn away the mortal portions of its body. The queen, who had been watching, when she saw her baby on fire, gave forth a loud cry and thus deprived it of immortality.” Isis now removed the wood of the heather (ἐπεύκη) (used as a pillar in the king’s palace) and found the chest with Osiris’ body. She then went off to her son Horus and hid the chest in a place well out of the way; but Typhon found it and recognizing the body divided it into fourteen parts and scattered them, each in a different place. According to tradition the result of Osiris’ dismemberment was that there were many so-called tombs of Osiris in Egypt, for Isis held a funeral for each part where she found it. Later Osiris came to Horus from the other world and exercised and trained him for the battle with Typhon. This battle lasted many days and Horus prevailed. Typhon was overcome in two other battles also. Osiris consorted with Isis after his death, and she became the mother of Harpocrates, untimely born and weak in his lower limbs. It was also said that Osiris was buried at Memphis,

where his incarnation the Apis-bull was worshipped by the Egyptians.

Like Persephone Osiris also has two realms, i.e. that of the Nether and that of the Upper worlds, in both of which he is life-giving. Osiris in his myth is the consort of Isis; in the myth of Cybele however Attis is only her completely devoted lover. This Asiatic goddess worshipped especially in Phrygia was originally also the mother of all that lives and exists in nature. Demeter is the goddess of the corn-ear and of vegetation. Cybele is in the first place mighty mistress of the animals, and she is therefore similar to some other Asiatic goddesses connected with the lion, the king of animals. The myth of her love for Attis is told both by Pausanias (second century A.D.) and Arnobius, a Christian author (third century A.D.). The myth related by them is the official version such as was told in Pessinus, the centre of the Phrygian cult (the main traits of the story are reflected in the artistic representations):

An enormous rock named Agdus in Phrygia took the form of the great Mother. While she slept Zeus tried to make love to her, but the goddess resisted and in the ensuing struggle Zeus lost his seed. From the rock (= the goddess) a wild bisexual being by the name of Agdistis was born. The gods were anxious and arranged to tame him. Liber or Bacchus mixed the water in the spring from which Agdistis usually drank with wine. When he had sunk into deep sleep, Bacchus tied his virile parts to a tree, with the result that on awakening he deprived himself of his virility. From the blood that he shed a pomegranate or almond tree sprang up and eventually bore fruit. Nana, the daughter of the king of the river Sangarius, took its fruit and put it in her lap; she then became pregnant and after many difficulties, in which the goddess Cybele was her helper, gave birth to a son, Attis. He was exposed by Sangarius, but was found and nourished by a goat. He grew up and became a shepherd. He was so handsome that the mother of the gods herself fell in love with him, and declared him her favourite on the condition that he accepted the favours of his divine protectress only. But fate induced Attis to allow himself to be seduced by a water-nymph, and Cybele took revenge. She drove Attis insane and he emasculated himself under a tree on the banks of the river Gallus. From his blood a spring burst fourth. Some authors say that Attis was changed into a pine tree and in this way never really died, but others relate that he died, and that his grave was to be seen at Pessinus. The archaeological sources show his emasculation, some of them suggesting that he is just about to awake (*cf.* Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 69) one relief shows him already dead. But the goddess felt compassion

for Attis and she asked—so Arnobius tells us (V,7;V,14)—Jupiter to bring her lover back to life. But Attis was not permitted to revive completely. Only his little finger will always be in motion and his hair will grow for ever. But from Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride*, 69) and some of the monuments one can deduce that there was also a tradition that the Phrygian god slept during the winter and awakened in the summer. In any case it is clear from the myth that the passion of Cybele for Attis was closely related to nature, of which the goddess was mistress.

In the myth of the Iranian Mithras however the main god is the creator (δημιουργός) of order in nature. He is better known from the arachaeological monuments of the Roman period than from the classical authors. After the creation of the world, Saturn or Kronos handed his powers over to his successor Jupiter, who is identified with the Iranian Ahura Mazda. This god of light, representing life and good, is engaged in an eternal battle with the might of darkness, representing evil and death. In this war Mithras is the faithful helper of Ahura Mazda or Ohrmuzd. He was born from a rock (*petra genetrix*), a symbol of the celestial vault. At birth he was already provided with bow, quiver, and dagger, which announce his future deeds. He is often represented in a forest with the bow and arrows like a Persian king at a hunt. Sometimes he shoots his arrows into a rock (= heaven) or into the clouds from which water miraculously pours—an eternal spring (*fons perennis*), or nectar. Mithras' most famous deed was the sacrifice of the bull. The sequence of events can be followed in the monuments. At first we see the god hunting the bull, who is quietly grazing in the meadows; after many struggles he finally masters the animal and carries him triumphantly on his shoulders to a grotto (*transitus dei*). In the grotto, against his will and at the command of the supreme god, he kills the bull. From the blood of the dying animal new vegetation arised in the form of corn-ears. After this *tauroktonos* scene there is a series which tells of his relationship with the Sun-god. Mithras concludes a treaty with Sol, who, apparently, first gave him the command of Jupiter (Ahura Mazda) to kill the bull. Then Sol is seen kneeling before the Iranian god who confers the accolade on him. During a sacred repast they eat the meat of the slaughtered bull and drink his blood. At the end of his earthly life Mithras accends to heaven with Sol in a chariot.

B. *Doctrine and Cult*

About the doctrine flowing from these various myths we know al-

most nothing, except in the case of Mithraism. The mystery cults were secret, and these secrets were mostly handed over (*tradere*) from father to son or by the priests to the initiate. Those who had knowledge of the cult were generally wise old men who were willing to expound their wisdom only after a certain time of preparation. In Mithraism the Magi or the *patres* of the community are sometimes represented with their attributes (ring, staff, and scroll) which assimilate them to philosophers (hence the title *magister sacrorum*). The priest at Memphis, who brought Thessalus (see p. 505) his vision of Asclepius, was old and wise and possessed the art of lecanomancy. The priest Mithra, who in Apuleius' book initiates Lucius into the cult of Isis, consults the holy books before doing so; in the Dionysus-villa at Pompeii one also sees the holy book. But it seems that this sacred literature contained more about the ceremonies, rites, and *formulae* than about the doctrine, which as in most religions of Antiquity, must have been undogmatic. According to Aristotle, *Metaphys.*, A 2 p. 982b 12ff, wondering about things brings man to both philosophy and religion. Consequently various philosophical systems influenced religion; astronomical and astrological theories are common to both of them. Just as in magic, the correct rites have to be followed in order to receive the favours of the deity. The divinity asks complete obedience and faith (*servus; militia*); in the rites one follows the divine example and each member of the community plays his prescribed role in the repetition of this sacred drama, which must end in a psychological climax. In order to exclude the *profanum vulgus*, one was generally bound by an holy oath (*sacramentum*); in this way the members (*socii; sodales*) were bound still more closely together in their community. Sometimes one is able through the ancient sources, either literary or archaeological, to assist at the sacred liturgy and holy services, such as initiation, and purification, the processions the hymns and meals. And so there was for every cult an occasionally large priestly class with various ranks and their assistants.

a. In Mithraism the god was conceived as the defender of righteousness and a victorious leader. The titles which his followers gave to him in their dedications express their own expectations clearly. He was the sun-god, born on the 25th of December, which is called the *natalis dei invicti*. Often in his company are Cautes with upraised torch and Cautopates with his flaming torch downwards. Both are *hypostases* of Mithras himself, who in this way is present the whole day. The god must especially be adored between morning and evening, and also on

the 16th of every month. He therefore is also called μεσίτης as the "mediator" between the supreme god and man. His divine deeds are recorded in the cult—especially his birth, the water-miracle, the slaying of the bull, and his sacred repast.

The new *mystes* was born into the cult like a naked child; he began a new life after having endured many trials. Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, 5 speaks of a purification which is compared with baptism, and elsewhere he tells us that this ceremony promised an *expiationem delictorum*, an expiation of faults. In the Mithraic sanctuaries one often finds a water basin, and the sanctuaries themselves are sometimes situated near a river or spring (Mithras' birth took place near a spring (*fons perennis*)). On the other hand two lines of a hymn in the Sa Prisca Mithraeum on the Aventine record that the water coming forth from the rock into which Mithras shot his arrows was the same as nectar or the beverage of immortality.

The adepts of the Sun god venerated the four elements which are often represented on the monuments by the symbolic group of bird, snake, vessel, and lion. It is probable that the initiates, just as in the Isiac mysteries, went in a symbolic way through *omnia elementa*. Moreover, as Sun god and *kosmokrator*, Mithras reigned over the seven planets and the twelve signs of the zodiac. Some of the ceremonies are therefore to be connected with both elements and planets. Mithras' heroic deeds before killing the bull and his *transitus* (see p. 511) are also reflected in the cult: his followers carried a burden on their shoulders as Mithras himself once carried the bull and performed the divine task (*maxima divum*). Like the raven that summoned Mithras to slay the bull, an initiate with the name of *corax* and sometimes wearing a raven's mask fulfilled the task of herald (*ceryx*) and assistant. The scene of the bull-slaying is intimately connected with that of the sacred meal. On some large reliefs, especially those from the Rhine countries, these two scenes are represented one on the obverse and the other on the reverse. The importance of the sacrifice of the bull lies not only in the creation of plantlife, but also in the fact that the meat and blood of the animal contain the substance of eternity. In other monuments we see Mithras and Sol, his companion, before they ascend to heaven. They are reclining at a table, sometimes covered with the bull's skin; in the Mithraic community the followers assisted at a meal consisting of either the meat and blood or their substitutes bread and wine. According to Tertullian, *De praescr. haer.*, 40, this sacred meal was a devilish imitation of the Eucharist and was supposed to give eternal life.

A line of verse in the Sa Prisca Mithraeum gives clear expression to this conception: *Et nos servasti eternali sanguine fuso*—And You saved us by means of this eternal blood You shed. In another line of verse the ideas of rebirth and recreation are combined. To those who participated in the meal immortality was given and after death their souls ascended to the eternal light just as Sol and Mithras went in the chariot up into heaven.

The archaeological discoveries (Sa Prisca Mithraeum at Rome; Ostia) make it possible for us to assist at the processions held in the sanctuary. In two of them the bull has a prominent place. He will be slain not only as an offering in the god's honour but also in order to re-enact the most glorious deed of Mithras. In one case the bull forms part of a *suovetaurilia* (pig, sheep, and bull) offering made officially on the occasion of the enlargement of the underground temple (Rome). Some initiates of higher rank are carrying a large vessel, a glass dish with bread, candlesticks, palmleaves, and a cock. Two other processions represent the seven grades of the initiated with their emblems; the latter are also known from mosaics at Ostia. Each of them is placed under the special protection of one of the planets. The arrangement is as follows:

1) corax	raven	Mercury	magic staff and cup
2) nymphus	bride	Venus	torch, lamp and diadem
3) miles	soldier	Mars	helmet, bag and lance
4) leo	lion	Jupiter	fire-shovel, rattle, thunderbolt
5) perses	persian	Luna	sickle, scythe and crescent
6) heliodromus	courier of the Sun	Sol	whip, torch and radiate halo
7) pater	father	Saturnus	ring, staff, phrygian cap, sickle

Each grade brings the devotee into closer contact with Mithras himself and the initiates of the highest are the representatives of the god on earth. The three lower grades are attendants, and the four higher ones are the real participants. In the various grades Mithras' deeds are reflected, as is clear from the *corax*, the *miles* (cf. *transitus dei*), the *heliodromus* (Sol): they are probably also connected with the elements: *corax* (air); *nymphus* (water); *miles* (earth); *leo* (fire). A mosaic floor in one of the Ostian sanctuaries shows the seven planetary spheres. As has been rightly noted these symbolize the Mithraic doctrine of the soul (Origenes, *contra Celsum*, VI,22). The soul, coming from the heavenly light into man's body, passes through the seven spheres and receives various qualities from each of the planets; the soul delivered from the body by death passes once again through the

spheres of the planets and lays down her qualities one by one before returning to the eternal light. Already during his life the *mystes* of Mithras is preparing himself for this journey to heaven by taking part in the sacred cult. It is likely that each time he entered a higher grade he had to undergo a special initiation and consecration. According to Tertullian the *miles* was branded with a sign on his forehead, and when he was being initiated in the cave, a wreath offered to him on the point of his sword and then placed on his head must be pushed off the head with the flat of his hand, and then laid on his shoulder with the words that Mithras alone was his wreath. Porphyry on the other hand gives the following details about the initiation of the lion: those who are being initiated as lions have honey instead of water poured over their heads to cleanse them, so that their hands are undefiled by evil, crime, or other contamination, as becomes an initiate. (This is a fitting absolution that is administered to them, since water, the usual cleansing agent, is the enemy of fire, the great purifier). And they also cleanse his tongue from sin with honey.

In this context three lines of verse in the Sa Prisca Mithraeum are interesting:

- 1) *Nama leonibus novis et multis annis*—"hail to the lions for many and new years." This is probably an acclamation to the lions after their elevation.
- 2) *Accipe thuricremos pater accipe sancte leones | per quos thuradamus per quos consumimur ipsi*—"receive, o holy Father, receive the incense-burning lions, through whom we offer the incense, through whom we ourselves are consumed." The last words may refer to the Stoic belief in the final conflagration of the kosmos, which was also accepted in the mithraic mysteries, as is clear from a Sol-Phaeton scene in the mithraeum at Dieburg in Germany. Something must be said about the adoration of the Eternal Time-god, many representations of whom have been found in the sanctuaries. Some "lions" during the ceremonies apparently wore a lion's mask, and this is connected with the fact that the Mithraic Time-god is given the head of a ravenous lion (symbol of fire). His body is entwined by a snake that is sometimes decorated with the signs of the zodiac. In his figure are combined the Iranian Zrvan akarana (infinite time), Kronos-Chronos and Saturn; and in one inscription such a statue of Aioon is dedicated to Ahriman, the god of Evil. He sometimes takes the form of a young god and is identified with Mithras himself, but other statues show him as terrible and omnipotent.

b. When the cult of Cybele came to Rome, a temple was built on the Palatine. This sanctuary is known through the excavations of P. Romanelli and a representation on the *Ara Pietatis* of Claudius (41-54 A.D.). It appears that the building, which was burnt down and restored several times, was relatively small and existed till into the fifth century A.D. The façade of the temple had six columns and a pediment decorated in its centre with a throne on which Cybele's mural crown was visible. Romanelli found many terracotta figurines of Attis dating from the Republican period of the temple. Statues were erected of Cybele herself and of the priestess Claudia Quinta, who in 204 B.C. brought the ship with the goddess' statue from Ostia to Rome. Before the sanctuary was a small theatre where dramatic performances were held during the feast of the Megalensia (see below). At the foot of the Palatine is the *circus maximus* with which the victorious goddess of life and death was also connected, and on the *spina* of which she was represented riding a lion. Another sanctuary dedicated to Cybele was situated on the Vatican hill near the circus of Nero; from this so-called *Phrygianum* many taurobolium inscriptions of later date (mostly fourth century A.D.) are known (see below). Her temple precinct at Ostia, which also contained a separate building for Attis and several rooms for the *collegia*, dates from the second century A.D. This vast *campus* has yielded many statues, reliefs, and dedications. The cult flourished especially in southern Gaul with Lyon as centre. But generally speaking these sanctuaries scattered throughout the Empire do not reveal many details about the cult, which had primarily an official character. This is also clear from the feasts held in March and April.

Our main source for the feasts of March is a calendar from 354 A.D. which gives them in the following order:

15th of March	<i>Canna intrat</i>
22th of March	<i>Arbor intrat</i>
24th of March	<i>Sanguem</i> or <i>Sanguis</i>
25th of March	<i>Hilaria</i>
26th of March	<i>Requietio</i>
27th of March	<i>Lavatio</i>
28th of March	<i>Initium Caiani</i>

From other sources one is able to deduce that the emperors Claudius and Antoninus Pius reorganised both cult and feasts so that more attention was paid to Attis. The ceremony of the "entry of the reed" was performed by the *cannephoroi*, who after having mown the reed

brought it in procession to the temple. This reed symbolized either Attis' exposure on the banks of the river Gallus and miraculous preservation or his emasculation, which the emperor Julian called "the sacred and ineffable harvest" (Graillot even supposes an allusion to Attis' love for the nymph (see p. 510). At this festival a sixyear-old bull was offered by the *archigallus* for the fertility of the mountain meadows.

From the 15th onwards there was a period of abstinence. On the 22nd the *dendrophori* carried a tree, almost certainly the pine as a symbol for Attis, to the Palatine. The tree was set up in the temple and the faithful mourned the dead god. On the following day, the feast of the *Salii*, who were later connected with the Attiscycle, the priests performed their sacred dance with shields and lances like Corybantes (see p. 502). On the "day of blood" the devotees or *galli* scourged and wounded themselves, commemorating Attis' castration, and others emasculated themselves in order to join their ranks. The pine-tree was then carried into the innermost part of the temple where it stayed till the following year. This *katabasis* symbolized Attis' burial and descent to the underworld. The *hilaria* on the following day were, as the name implies, a festive occasion. The 25th of March is according to Macrobius, *Sat.*, I,21,10 the first day of the year in which the sun makes the day longer than the night (*sol diem longiorem nocte protendit*). It is generally accepted that this feast was like that of the preceeding days, in honour of Attis and commemorates his resurrection. However as Lambrechts points out it is possible that the *hilaria* took place before the *lavatio*, only at a late stage in the history of the rite, and do not refer to the joy of the goddess and her followers at Attis' resurrection, but were held to commemorate Cybele's finishing her mourning after bathing in the Almo. Lambrechts has shown that there was an evolution in the successive feasts. It seems clear that there were two main series: the first concerned with Attis and the second with Cybele. The *hilaria* eventually came to form the transition between the end of Attis' passion and the reunion of Cybele with her lover. The day of rest (*requietio*) consequently took on a more definite character. The feasts of Attis (*Attideia*) in the innermost parts of the sanctuary developed into mysteries; the feasts of Cybele remained more public and official, as is attested by the public processions in which representatives of the state also participated. The concluding *initium Caiani* took place in the sanctuary near the Vatican hill next to the Circus of Gaius Caligula. The word *initium* seems to indicate an initiation of some kind, but this all we can say with certainty about the final ceremony.

In the sixth century A.D. Damascius tells us that at Hierapolis in Syria he had a dream that he had become Attis (ὁ Ἀττης γενέαι), and that the Mother of the gods celebrated the feast of the *hilaria* for him—proof that he was saved from the underworld (τὴν ἐξ ᾧδου γεγονυῖαν ἡμῶν σωτηρίαν). The words “I have become an initiate of Attis” (γέγονα μύστης Ἀττεως) are found in a secret formula transmitted by Firmicus Maternus (fourth century A.D.), and in another form by Clement of Alexandria (second century A.D.). Clement (*Protr.*, II,15,3) mentions four “signs of initiation”: ἐκ τυμπάνου ἐφαγον, ἐκ κυμβάλου ἐπιον, ἐκερνοφόρησα, ὑπὸ τὸν παστὸν ὑπέδυν, whereas Firmicus, *De err. rel. prof.*, XVIII,1 gives three in two different versions:

- 1) ἐκ τυμπάνου βέβρωκα, ἐκ κυμβάλου πέπωκα, γέγονα μύστης Ἀττεως,
- 2) *de tympano manducavi, de cymbalo bibi, et religionis secreta perdidici*

i.e. after learning the secrets of the mysteries I became an initiate of Attis; the variant of Clement one has generally interpreted as an entering into the παστὸς, the bridal chamber or shrine. It is not clear what was actually eaten and drunk from the sacred instruments, which were commonly used in the cult. The “carrying of the vessel” is an expression which also occurs in the rite of the *taurobolium* (see below). Its meaning is more obvious in that context, but it is unclear whether the *vires* i.e. the testicles or blood of the bull were carried.

After the feasts of Cybele and Attis in March followed the *Megale(n)-sia* (so-called after the Μήτηρ μεγάλη) for Cybele alone. The fourth of April was the anniversary of the goddess’ coming to Rome in 204 B.C.; and on the tenth of April the dedication of her temple on the Palatine was celebrated (*dies natalis*). During these festivities the Roman aristocracy, who had introduced the cult into Rome (see p. 501) played a leading role. They organized the sacrifices, the banquet (*lectisternium*) for the whole people, and the mutual meals, and the *ludi megalenses* consisting both of plays in the *circus maximus* (where the goddess had a statue on the *spina*) and of the plays in the theatre before her temple during which her statue was present. Only free-born Romans were admitted to these *ludi*.

The same evolution recognizable in the March feasts is also clear in the ceremony of the *taurobolium*, as R. Duthoy has recently demonstrated. One sometimes finds the term *criobolium* also. The name derives from the custom of catching a bull or ram, and killing (βάλλειν) and eating him in confraternity—both animals being specially associated with virility. (Later on their virile parts played a leading role in the rite. The epigraphical sources mention the ceremony at Rome in the

period of A.D. 295 till 390), but in Ostia and the Roman provinces *taurobolium* inscriptions are found dating from as early as A.D. 160.

The best literary source for this rite is also late. The poet Prudentius, writing A.D. 410 *Perist.*, X.1011ff gives an extensive description: the chiefpriest (*summus sacerdos* = *archigallus*) descends into a pit in his robes. A wooden platform is then laid above the pit and through the holes drilled in it the bull's blood streams down upon the priest who even licks it up. When the bull has pulled away, the *archigallus*, horrible to see, shows himself to the people, who adore him from a distance (*adorant eminus*). It is possible that the pit discovered in Ostia next to the sanctuary of Attis was put to such a use. But what is the real meaning of the ceremony? According to Prudentius the priest was venerated like a god, and Firmicus Maternus (c. A.D. 350) remarks that the blood pollutes and does not redeem (*polluit sanguis iste, non redimit*)—in contrast with the blood of Christ. This may point to the fourth century belief that one received a spiritual purification from the *taurobolium*. On the other hand, we also find the idea that the blood of the bull or ram renews man's vitality. Two late data from Rome are especially interesting in this respect. A poem from A.D. 394 contains the line *vivere cum speras mundus viginti in annos*, when you hope to live in purity for twenty years. The effect of the *taurobolium* was clearly now restricted to a certain period. In an inscription from A.D. 376 there is even talk of *in aeternum renatus*. But then we are at the end of the evolution; in the case of the earlier inscriptions one can generally establish that the *taurobolia* (which could be held on most various days of the year and which therefore were not connected directly with the feasts in March and April) were performed for the welfare (*pro salute*) of the emperor, the imperial house, the family, the senate, the city, the army, or the fleet.

c. New excavations have shown that the temple of Serapis at Memphis is older than that at Alexandria. At Memphis the site of the Serapeum proper is known to be near the necropolis of the Apis-bulls but has yet to be explored. A long *dromos* decorated with a series of sphinxes from the time of Nectanebo I (378-360 B.C.), the founder of the XXXth Dynasty, leads to the sanctuary. Ptolemy I (306-285) who re-organized the cult and brought it under strong dionysian influence, built a large *hemicyclus* with statues of philisophers and poets; there are also a small separate building for Apis and a *lychnapterion*, a building for the corporation of the *lychnaptae* i.e. for those who provided the lights in the necropolis and in the funerary cult. In the sacred precinct

of the temple lived the *κατοχοι* who were not allowed to leave the sanctuary of their god; oracles were given and *incubation* was practised. A recently discovered inscription mentions that Ptolemy III "built the temple and the sacred precinct for Ousor-Hapi." This temple, which was destroyed in A.D. 391 was situated on a hill, which according to the late statement of Rufinus was man-made. The area accessible by a flight of one hundred steps is square and of large dimensions. There are also the propylaea and an enormous square portico in which the Serapeum, a temple for Anubis, and a library were built. In the neighbourhood is a necropolis.

The two large Serapeia in Rome, the first constructed in A.D. 38 on the Campus Martius and the other during the reign of Caracalla on the Quirinal, are well-known. The temple of Caligula was dedicated to both Isis and Serapis. Coins show that this Isis-temple was surrounded by a large portico; the marble plan of Rome gives the Serapeum as a separate building with a large semi-circular apse at its southern end. Small temples were sometimes also erected for Serapis and Isis by private persons (Delos; Pompeii). In Pompeii the Iseum is situated in a rectangular area surrounded by a peristylum of 25 columns. The temple itself consists of a *naos* and a *pronaos* to which seven steps lead up. In the *naos* were probably the statues of both Isis and Serapis. Before the temple is an altar. In the S.E. part of the court is a small subterranean room with a basin, which one may consider as a *megaron* (inscription at Ostia) or as a room reserved for the initiation such as is also found elsewhere. Joined to the temple there are two large and five small rooms. The largest is probably the *ekklesiasterion*, which served for the repasts of the devotees, for the reunions of the *isiaci*, or for the dramatic representations of the sacred myth. The smaller room or *sacrarium* might also have served for initiation-rites. The five other rooms are of minor importance (kitchen, dining-room). There were usually special rooms for the priests such as the *pastophori* (shrine-bearers), and the Egyptian character of the cult was stressed in the paintings and statues. Sometimes the myth of Isis and Osiris was retold; the principal deities Serapis-Anubis-Horus and Harpocrates were also present. In two paintings from Herculaneum one can see the ceremonies before the entrance of the temple. In one of them a priest, assisted by two attendants, holds in his veiled hands a vessel containing the water of the Nile-Osiris. Another priest kindles a fire of the altar before the sanctuary, at his side a priest with in either hand a staff is standing; before the steps a priest, like the others shaven-headed, holds

a sceptre in his upraised right hand and a *sistrum* (rattle) in his left. Two groups of musicians—some with musical instruments—acclaim the goddess. The painting probably represents the morning service when the devotees greeted the returning light (Apuleius, *Met.*, XI,20). The other painting represents the temple precinct and another building with columns. On the platform a dark individual in a loincloth and a shoulder-cape, his head decorated with leaves and a lotus flower, and probably wearing a mask, is performing a dance. He represents either Osiris himself or the god Bes. Priests, women, and children accompany him with *sistra*, a *tympanum*, and a flute. Before the building is a smoking altar to which a woman and a child are bringing offerings. In both paintings sphinxes, ibises, or palmtrees indicate the Egyptian character of the cult. Reliefs sometimes show a procession. One, probably from Rome and now in the Vatican museum, shows four persons walking behind each other:

- 1) a priestess with a lotus flower on her head, holding a *situla* (an urn) in her left hand; a snake is coiled round her outstretched right arm.
- 2) a priest with a diadem on his head. He holds a scroll open before him with both hands (ιερογραμματεύς).
- 3) a priest (προφήτης) *capite velato* who holds the vessel with the holy Nile water in his veiled hands.
- 4) a priestess holding a *sistrum* in her left hand and a *simpulum* (a small ladle) in her right.

On a relief now in Berlin, Anubis holding a palm branch and dish leads the procession, in which a child playing the double flute also takes part. It should be noted that in all mysteries the pure child is to be found and is often looked upon as a mediator between the divine and human (oracles, prophecies).

Just as in the Cybele-cult there are in the Isiac ceremonies public carnival-like processions. In the Isiac cult these take place on the feast of the *navigium Isidis* (πλοιαφέσια) on the fifth of March, when the new maritime season opens. The goddess is the protectress of ships, navigation, and harbours (Isis *pelagia*; *pharia*; *euploia*). On this day a new ship dedicated to the goddess is launched into the sea. As Alföldi has shown, the Isis-ship on the coins in the fourth century was even as a propaganda medium connected with the *vota publica* in the beginning of the year.

From 13th-16th November and from 29th October-1st November in the sanctuaries the finding (*inventio*; εὑρεσις) of Osiris' body was

commemorated. During these days the story of Isis and Osiris is re-enacted: the wandering of Isis, her lamentations, the finding of Osiris cut into pieces by Seth-Typhon, the resurrection of his body (Firm. Mat., *De err. prof. rel.*, 22,2; *tu iacentia lapidis membra componis*). Firmicus Maternus quotes a sacred formula pronounced by the priest when after the lamentations he has anointed the throats of the initiated and the light is brought out:

θαρρεῖτε μύσται τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωσμένου
ἔσται γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐκ πόνων σωτηρία

Keep good heart, initiates, since the god has been saved and we shall be saved from our troubles. Now begin the *hilaria*: εὐρῆκαμεν, συγχαίρομεν. The following words of Firmicus are also most interesting: "may You die as he dies, may You live as he lives (*sic moriaris ut moritur, sic vivas ut vivit*).

It is, however, Apuleis, himself an initiate into the Isiac mysteries (*Met.*, XI,19ff), who gives the most helpful information about them. After many adventures in the shape of an ass, his hero, Lucius is transformed again into human shape during the feast of the *navigium* in Cenchreae near Corinth. Completely persuaded of the might of the goddess he now has only one wish, and that is to be initiated into her cult. The goddess gives the sign to him and the highpriest Mithras in a dream. Lucius undergoes the necessary preparation: from holy books the priest reads the instructions for providing the necessary clothes and accessories; Lucius is then bathed and sprinkled with holy water by the priest, *praefatus deum veniam* which Nelson interpretes as an absolution; and follows a period of ten days of abstinence. In *Met.*, XI,23 Lucius tells: *Accessi confinium mortis et calcato Proserpinae limine per omnia vectus elementa remeavi, nocte media vidi solem candido coruscantem lumine deos inferos et superos accessi coram et adoravi de proximo* = I approached the very gates of death and set one foot on Proserpine's threshold, yet was permitted to return, rapt through all elements. At midnight I saw the sun shining as if it were noon; I entered the presence of the gods of the underworld and the gods of the upperworld, stood near and worshipped them" (translation: Robert Graves). The next morning Lucius is shown to the crowd. He is now dressed in twelve *stolae* and a long shoulder-cape, which the initiates call the olympian *stola*. These garments symbolize the sun. The following day the initiate celebrates his *natalis sacrorum* with a festive repast. On the third day he performs the same rites. Lucius then prays

to the goddess who is invoked as the queen of the underworld and with epithets also found in her hymns. Isis advises Lucius to go to Rome for an second initiation. And here in the temple of the Campus Martius he is received into the mysteries of the *magni dei deumque summi parentis* Osiris. These mysteries probably consisted of a sacred drama telling the story of the god (see p. 508). Again after fasting and abstaining for ten days and after having shaved his head Lucius "was admitted to the nocturnal orgies of the great god and became his illuminate." (*principalis dei nocturnis orgiis inlustratus*). Finally Lucius is advised to undergo still a third initiation *deis magnis auctoribus*, which wanted seem to imply in the mysteries of both Isis and Osiris. The latter manifested himself in a dream and "now he deigned to address me in his own person, with his own divine mouth." Lucius becomes not only a member of the order of shrine-bearers (*pastophori*) but also a temple councillor (*decurio*) for the next five years.

It is remarkable that Apuleius does not mention the mysteries of Serapis, but only those of Isis and Osiris. And yet the inscriptions also give evidence concerning the *collegium* of Serapiasti, who hold banquets together and who recorded their decrees on official *stelae*. In the second place it is clear that the culmination is the adoption of the initiated in the priesthood. When Lucius prepares himself for the first initiation (Apuleius, *Met.*, XI,21) the priest explains him that "the gates of the underworld and the guardianship of life are in the goddess's hands and that the rites of initiation approximate to a voluntary death (*voluntaria mors*) from which there is only a precarious hope of resurrection (*precaria salus*)." It has been suggested that this scene is shown in a mosaic from a house in Antioch. Before the open door of a temple (Hades) stands the initiate, half-naked and barefoot, and attended by Hermes and Isis. The goddess stretches forth her hand to sustain the devotee who is starting the journey to the underworld. In Apuleius' text he will return safely and he will be *renatus* after having renounced his former life. He now starts a new life and may be sure of enjoying a happy afterlife also.

d. The Syrian Cults

The excavations at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates have revealed the nature of the religion of a hellenistic Syrian city. In hellenism I the official religion was the same as in other Macedonian colonies: Zeus Olympios, Apollo, and Artemis, the gods of the Seleucid monarchy and also the deified Seleucus himself were the principal deities. There

were also however gods of Semitic origin, who came from various countries. In hellenism II the Roman soldiers adored the Pantheon, as in Rome, and also the oriental gods such as Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus. But the Roman religion like the Greek, was much more important for the garrisons than for the civil population of the city. As M. Rostovtzeff remarks: "the real religion of Dura, that of the large majority of the population, was the Semitic religion, or rather the traditional religion of the predominantly Semitic part of the Near East. The Greek inhabitants were certainly aware of this tendency towards unification. They understood that behind the variety of gods and goddesses, most of them Semitic, there was a unity. They knew that in fact it was one and the same god who was worshipped under different names in most of the large temples of Dura—the great sky god of solar henotheism and they showed their knowledge by giving this god one and the same name—Zeus."

The great goddess was venerated under the name of Artemis. Rostovtzeff has also shown that in Dura there is found "a kind of religious *κοινή*, familiar to all the Semites and to the semitized Greeks and Iranians throughout Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Arabia. The greatest creation of this *κοινή* was a solar henotheism, which in this period became more and more important. A counterpart to it was the creation of the dominant figure of the Great Goddess, whose worship became the religion of women not only in Syria but all over the Roman Empire."

It was especially at Byblos that the cult of Adonis flourished; past this city flowed the river Adonis which yearly became red, a sign for the celebrations of the god's death. It was said that he stayed four months in the underworld and then returned to earth in order to live together with Aphrodite. His cult and his feast, in which the women commemorated his violent death by a boar and his return to the upper-world, were already spread over the hellenic world long before hellenism I.

Later the "Adonis-gardens" (vases in which grain was planted) remained popular, though in Rome itself one has only scanty evidence of his worship. The very location of the *Adonaea* recorded in both the Severan marble plan of Rome and in Philostratus (*Vita Apollonii*, VII, 32) is uncertain.

The signification of the name Adonis is Lord. In Syria there were many local 'Lords' or Ba'als, who were originally the Lords of heaven, the protectors of the harvest and of the city. They generally formed a

couple with a goddess who was the protectress of fertility and love, and who belonged to the type of "mistress of the animals". Some of these cults spread into the Western world. In the city of Hierapolis (= Bambyce) to the north-east of Aleppo the goddess Atargatis had a large temple. Her cult and her sanctuary are especially well known through a book *περὶ τῆς Συρίης θεοῦ* attributed to the Syrian Lucian (second century A.D.). The temple was situated on a hill; in a court were several statues of gods, kings, and mythological figures.

There was also a large altar of bronze, and in the court animals (even bears and lions) lived peacefully together. A number of enormous *phalloi* also stood there. Twice a year a man climbed to the top of one of them and prayed there during seven days for the devotees. There were many priests, some of whom were eunuchs or *galli*; sacred prostitution was also practised. In the innermost shrine of the temple, into which only certain priests were permitted to go, there stood three golden images. The statue of Atargatis is compared with that of Hera by Lucian, but she has also traits of Athena, Aphrodite, Selene, Rhea, Artemis, Nemesis, and the Moirae. She was represented seated upon lions, and her consort Hadad who may be compared to Zeus was seated upon bulls. Between them was a golden statue which Lucian denotes by *σημήιον*. This had a dove on its head. It is certainly their son, who was called Simmas or Simmias. In this divine couple the goddess was the most important; the *dea Syria* was even invoked in the distant province of Britannia.

In the other Syrian cults, the male divinity was the more important one. Jupiter Dolichenus had his sanctuary from Hittite times in Doliche, the present-day Tell-Duruk in the province Commagene. This place was connected with the origin of iron (*ubi ferrum nascitur*), and the god himself was consequently represented with an iron axe in his upraised right hand. He is a god of the thunder and lightning and at the same time the lord of the bull. In this latter capacity he is shown on the back of the bull, whereas his consort, identified with Juno, mostly stands upon the back of a hind. Reliable information about the cult of this divine couple in its country of origin is lacking, since their sanctuary on the hill has not yet been excavated. Syrian traders and soldiers brought their god to the West and he is sometimes closely connected with the other god of the bull, the Iranian Mithras. In places where the latter was adored, Jupiter Dolichenus was also found; thus his cult spread over the whole Empire.

In Rome he had two sanctuaries situated on the Aventine and on

the Esquiline. The former is the better known (excavations of A. M. Colini). Its construction was completed in A.D. 138 when Antoninus Pius began his reign, which was most favourable for the oriental cults. The temple consists of a large central chamber and two smaller side-rooms. Two elevated benches against the northern and southern sides of the central room suggest its use for sacred meals; the western side-room, which has a large niche with three smaller niches inside, is supposed to have been a *schola*; the eastern room may have been used for lustrations. However, comparison of this temple in Rome with others shows that the Dolichena did not, unlike the Mithraea, have a certain definite groundplan. Moreover, these sanctuaries were mostly only small chapels. The many monuments, among which the silver triangular votive-plates are particularly characteristic, tell more than the literary sources what were the beliefs of Dolichenus' followers. They regarded their god as their supreme ruler and protector,—he wears the imperial military dress, and is even called in inscriptions the *aeternus conservator totius mundi* or the *conservator totius poli et numen praestantissimum exhibitor invictus*. He had indeed become the king of the cosmos and cosmic powers, and was consequently accompanied not only by the triad formed of the eagle, sun, and moon, but also by the two Dioscuri, sometimes referred to as the *castores conservatores*, who symbolized the two hemispheres. It is therefore quite understandable that his followers, who were organized in a community of *fratres* with a cult consisting of processions, ablutions, meals, and even the practice of oniromancy, saw in such a powerful god the one who could bring salvation to their souls.

The cult of Jupiter Heliopolitanus derives from Heliopolis, the present-day Ba'albek. There was already a temple-complex on the acropolis, but it was not until the third century A.D. that it reached the height of its fame. In its final form, known from the French and German excavations, the enormous temple of the god himself, the architects of which are unknown, was fronted by a large open square with two basins and the altar. Later on the propylaion and a hexagonal court were added with the aid of the Severan house and Philip the Arabian. In the same period a sanctuary in honour of Dionysus, on the southern side of Jupiter's temple, also surrounded by rows of columns, was built. In the interior a flight of steps leads to the baldachino, below which the cult-image stood. On the right there is underneath the floor of the cella, a crypt consisting of two vaulted rooms; and on the left there are seven steps leading into a room in which stood a table for

offerings. Two other temples in the immediate neighbourhood of the acropolis are supposed to have been dedicated the one to Mercury and the other to Aphrodite. In this way each member of the heliopolitan triad had his or her own temple and again, just as in nearly all oriental cults, the dionysiac element was very evident.

The name Heliopolis indicates that the Ba'al of that city was already in hellenism I a solar god, formed a couple with Atargatis i.e. Venus, and who had a son, Mercury. Macrobius (*Sat.*, 23,10-20) describes his original statue: "it is in fact a golden statue of beardless aspect, standing like a charioteer with a whip in its raised hand, a thunderbolt and corn-ears in the left—attributes which all indicate the combined power of Jupiter and the sun." This sun-god came to the West, especially to Rome and Puteoli, where Tyrian colonists had settled. His cult spread even to Britain and Austria. The cult-images we have do indeed correspond to Macrobius' description, but the god has on either side a bull, and he wears, like Serapis, a *modius*. Sometimes his cuirass-like garment (*ependytes*) is decorated with busts of the planets, still stressing more his solar character. Sometimes the solar disk with two uraeus-snakes also occurs (e.g. on a marble stele from Marseilles). He is at the same time a weather and a vegetation god.

A temple for the heliopolitan triad has been found on the Janiculum in Rome. In this sanctuary, which dates from the Antonine period and was still in use during the fourth century, there are three rooms communicating with each other. The central room has no particular characteristics and was destined for the official cult. The left-hand room however is divided again in three parts and has in the middle a niche before which a triangular altar stood. Its three sides have representations of respectively a bull, Sol, and Luna. The right-hand room, added in the fourth century, ends in a sexagonal(?) niche in which a basalt statue of a pharaoh has been found (probably replacing a statue of Osiris). In a triangular grave before the niche a small bronze statue was discovered. A male figure, wearing an Egyptian *klaft* and standing in a hieratic attitude, is encircled seven times by a snake. According to Maria B. Felletti-Maj one may recognize here the son of the divine couple, i.e. Mercury identified with Adonis, Dionysus, and Osiris.

In honour of the Syrian triad there was also a mystery cult under the direction of a *pater* and during which in certain ceremonies the grave and dead body of the young god were shown. The titles *κίστιβερ* and *δειπνοκρίτης* of one of the devotees indicate sacred cultic meals.

Of the other Syrian gods the sun-god Malakbel and the moon-god

Aglibol came to Rome. They originated in Palmyra, the city from which at the end of the third century Aurelian brought the sun-god of Emesa to be the generally acknowledged State-god, intending that he should now be adored in a more Roman way, and not, as under Heliogabalus, in the Syrian fashion that had proved too oriental for Roman tastes.

V. SHORT HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF HELLENISTIC RELIGION

Since it was during the hellenistic period that many of the mystery-cults and Christendom, from Antiquity onwards the literature reflects the ever-increasing antagonism, which finally led to Christianity's victory. On one side we find the ancient and often oriental gods praised in hymns, speeches and treatises; on the other the revolutionary new Jewish religion. Official paganism, including the oriental cults, was for several centuries at war with this new oriental religion which was not content before it obtained the supremacy. The fierce struggle involved the Christian authors not only in defending their faith with apologetic writings but also in attacking their opponents. The Christians also claimed ancient traditions; pagan rites were ridiculed or branded as devilish imitations of the ceremonies of the one true faith. Even in Antiquity both parties disputed the questions of priority and mutual influences; on a lower level they accused each other of the most various crimes. Both were proud of wonder-workers and both were eagerly doing their best to give to their ideas a philosophical background. In the case of the Church-Fathers we can safely say that they generally knew the official deities of the surrounding hellenistic world very well, but that with few exceptions they could not have been able to judge the secret doctrines of the mystery cults for which an initiation was necessary. And yet much of our information about these cults is derived from these very apologists, since the scriptures of the opposition party are either lost or were intentionally destroyed. Archaeological monuments sometimes fill a part of this enormous gap.

In the quarrel between the two parties Celsus was the first to write against the Christians with any real knowledge of his adversaries' faith. His *'Αληθής λόγος* was written towards the end of the second century A.D. Celsus' book is lost, but we know his arguments through Origen, who a century later attacked him fiercely in a work in which

he treats nearly all the important questions of Christians doctrine from a philosophical point of view. Somewhat later the neoplatonist Porphyrius wrote a treatise *κατὰ Χριστιανῶν*; this book was later on systematically destroyed after having been attacked by various Christian apologists, Eusebius of Caesarea and Apollinaris of Laodicea. In the fourth century there were many up and downs for both parties: but after the reign of the Emperor Julian, who like the neoplatonist Sallustius wrote books in praise of the ancient gods, and after the disputes between the two parties in the Senate such as that about the statue of Victory in the Curia, the battle was lost and people started to destroy the old sanctuaries. The subsequent fall of Rome, the *caput mundi*, seemed incredible to the whole world. Hence the dispute about its causes, which form a religious point of view might be connected with the abandoning of the traditional gods. In the same period the growing Church had to defend itself not only against paganism but also against the controversies between the various Christian sects. The study of hellenism II largely depends from this complete context of current ideas.

In the following centuries the Church inherited the power of ancient Rome, and tried hard to preserve a certain measure of unity. The old traditions were incorporated into the ever more dogmatic Christian system. Both Edgar Wind, *The Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London 1958) and Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (1963) have recently demonstrated how the ancient gods lived on, sometimes in disguised forms, and inspired many artists to create masterpieces. Of interest is the fact that the study of Greek and Roman religion increased though not as an independent discipline, since it was almost always carried on within Christian frames of reference. These studies prepared the way for the more independent ones which began to flourish in the 18th and 19th centuries under the influence of rationalism. It is a pity however that many of the books written during this period deal mainly with the old question of the priority and mutual influences of the hellenistic creeds and Christendom. Even at the beginning of the 20th century it seemed that the quarrel of the two ancient parties had been revived. A typical book in this respect is that of Edwin Hatch, *The influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church* (London 1907); Ernest Renan and Alfred Loisy supported similar views, and influenced the conception of hellenism very greatly, as did James Frazer, who, in his voluminous work *The golden Bough* developed his ideas about the dying and resurrecting gods. For the

other side studies such as *Attis et le Christianisme* of J. Lagrange (in *Rev. Bibl.*, XXVIII, 1919, pp. 419-480) and of J. Dey, *Παλιγγενεσία* (Münster 1937) may be taken as representative.

A new era in the knowledge of the oriental mystery-cults starts with Franz Cumont. In his two volumes about Mithraism he gathered both literary and archaeological sources,—the latter being in this cult the principal documents. G. Lafaye had already performed a similar task for the Isis and Serapis cult and soon after H. Graillot's monograph about Cybele and Attis was published. It was of course Fr. Cumont himself who showed the way in which the problems should be approached by paying great attention to the archaeological finds in his *Religions orientales*. But he also developed the study of many other sources of a better understanding of the religious thoughts of hellenism (astrological texts; alchemy; the intensive influence of Dionysiac ideas; hermetism), as well as investigating the origins and development of the mystery-cults, their mutual influences and their influence on the ideas about the after-life. M. Nilsson, A. D. Nock, and A. J. Festugière are other prominent scholars who have all used the same historical method to lay the foundations of our present knowledge of hellenistic religious thought. It now seems that neither in Antiquity nor in modern times the right moment has come for a definite answer to the always intriguing priority-question. There are still too many areas for which thorough well documented studies are lacking, and it is these that are needed before a satisfactory answer can be attempted. One must not forget that it is only in the last few decades that archaeological methods have become something like what they should be, that especially in the near-eastern countries the excavations are only at the starting-point; that an inventory of former finds has not yet always been made, and that of these documents the exact data or find-circumstances are usually either lost or only to be discovered with the greatest difficulty. Monographs about the propagation of the various cults, about the religious creeds in the cities of countries with such varying populations, about the social status of their adherents and about their mutual influences are still few and far between—an enormous task has still to be completed by the next generations.

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